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ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL ITEMS

STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN THE SWISS ECONOMY

During the last seven years the number of persons employed in agriculture, forestry and mining has dropped from 31.4 per cent to 7.6 per cent of Switzerland's total working population, reports the May 1972 issue of the Union Bank of Switzerland brochure ("Business Facts and Figures").

In the same period, the share of those employed in industry, the trades and construction rose from 43.3 per cent to 48.3 per cent. The share of people working in the service sector showed an even greater change, rising from 25.3 per cent to 44.1 per cent.

With the exception of West Germany, Switzerland has the smallest tertiary sector (i.e. services) of all the important industrial nations. For example, in the U.S.A. more than 62 per cent of the working population is employed in the services sector, whereas in Switzerland this figure comes to only about 44 per cent. In Switzerland, however, more importance attaches to industry and the trades (secondary sector) in terms of employment than in most other industrial nations.

In the primary sector (agriculture) the share of employed persons, at 7.6 per cent, is only half that found in France (15 per cent) but still larger than in other countries (Great Britain 3.5 per cent, U.S.A. 4.5 per cent, Belgium 6.3 per cent). The mountain cantons, the north western region of Berne and Fribourg as well as the central and eastern parts of Switzerland still display a relatively pronounced rural character. Industry and trade establishments predominate in the cantons of Solothurn, Aargau, Glarus and Neuchatel whereas the service industries are most strongly represented in the regions of Schaffhausen, Thurgau, Basle-Land and St. Gallen.

Projections by a St. Gallen University study group (Prof. Kneschaurek) indicate that by the year 2000 the share of Swiss employed in agriculture, forestry and mining will have declined to just slightly over 4 per cent. Only 47 per cent of the working population will be employed in industry and the trades, whereas nearly half the labour force will work in the services sector.

The U.B.S. review notes that the shift towards greater employment in

the service sector is particularly pronounced in the tourist regions and in the metropolitan areas with large population growth. In the cantons of Basle-Land, Zug, Valais Aargau (with dormitory towns for Zurich), Geneva, Tessin and the Grisons, the share of the labour force employed in the tertiary sector rose by as much as one to two thirds in the period from 1960 to 1970. The smallest increases were registered in the cantons of Basle-Stadt, Glarus as well as in Appenzell Inner Rhodes and Outer Rhodes.

In the last decade the percentage of persons employed in the secondary sector declined in the latter cantons, whereas in all of the others it tended upwards. Shortage of labour and the lack of possibilities for industrial plants to expand led to a shifting of production facilities from the big cities to the outlying agglomeration areas. This is reflected by the more than 15 per cent decline over the past ten years in the percentage of persons employed in the City of Zurich's industrial sector.

In the years to come, continues the Review, Switzerland's agriculture will be concentrated even more than before in the cantons of Berne, Fribourg and Valais, as well as in eastern Switzerland. During the last ten years, the sharpest decline in the percentage of people employed in the primary sector was recorded in the Tessin (-56 per cent) whereas the smallest was registered in the Canton of Appenzell Inner Rhodes (-21 per cent).

Turning to the increase of the growth of the economy, the Review mentions that growth impulses both at home and from abroad were on the wane in the second half of 1971. For example, in the fourth quarter of 1971 the nominal increase in consumption was 7.6 per cent (8.5 per cent the previous year) and that both order volumes and order backlogs in industry were lower in the last three months of 1971 than a year earlier.

Swiss exports rose by 5.9 per cent in the fourth quarter, which was also short of the 1970 figure.

This development led to a marked wait-and-see attitude in respect of corporate spending but some upswing due to impulses emanating from the domestic economy were registered in the first quarter of this year. There was a higher level of retail sales and substantial gains in the building industry. The Swiss consumer price

index had risen by 6.3 per cent between April 1971 and April 1972.

Europeanisation of the Watch Fair and the further opening up of the Swiss Industries Fair in Basle

The Board of Directors of the Swiss Industries Fair decided unanimously at its meeting on 24th May on the europisation of the Watch Fair within the framework of the Swiss Industries Fair. On the basis of this decision, starting with the Swiss Industries Fair 1973 7th-17th April, the Basle Watch Fair will be open for direct and individual participation by exhibitors and products from the watch and jewellery industries and from branches associated with the watch industry (works and casing parts, accessories and tools, measuring and testing apparatus, production and sales services) from all EEC and EFTA countries. From the enquiries already received, a considerable extension of the Basle Watch Fair, which looks back on more than 40 years' experience, can be expected.

On the basis of further decisions made by the Board of Directors, in the course of the opening up of the Swiss Industries Fair to the European market—which actually started two years ago—foreign products will be allowed at the stands of Swiss firms in the following display groups: household goods (domestic appliances, household machines, kitchen installations); toys, photographic and film supplies; electronics for entertainment such as radio, television, musical instruments etc.; Camping, boats; office equipment (organisation and office machines), paper and advertising, as well as in the whole of the Construction Fair (wood, building materials, structural elements, constructional chemistry, floor coverings, floor care, electrical installation materials, light fittings, sanitary installations, heating: boilers, radiators, oil furnaces, chimney construction; air-conditioning, sauna, firefighting equipment), furthermore garden furniture, gardening equipment and swimming pools, as well as in the industrial welding group.

Sulzer's 30,000th Loom

In April 1972, the 30,000th loom made by Sulzer Brothers & Co. Ltd., Engineering Works, at Winterthur (Zurich, Switzerland), was put into operation in the Broadfield weaving mills belonging to Gledhill Brothers & Co. Ltd., Huddersfield, Yorkshire, England. The Sulzer loom made its first appearance on the market in 1953, after over 20 years of development. A revolutionary novelty at the time, it was the first shuttleless loom

to be used industrially. As a result of a large French order for 96 machines, which started up mass production, the new loom made a name for itself first of all in Switzerland, then in Austria, Germany and Great Britain, to spread shortly all over Europe and to countries overseas. The 1,000th machine was put into operation in 1957, the 5,000th in 1962, the 10,000th in 1965, the 20,000th in 1969 and the 30,000th today. Sales all over the world continue to increase. Over 95% of the total number of looms produced are exported to all continents; they have been delivered to some 750 production units in over 50 countries. In Great Britain, where today over 2,300 Sulzer looms operate in 53 plants, it is the Parkland group that enabled the Swiss pioneer of shuttleless weaving to gain a footing on the British market during the fifties. By 1955, Parkland had installed an experimental plant comprising 16 multicolour looms and, in co-operation with Sulzer, worked out a development scheme based on the knowledge and knowhow acquired. Other groups of looms were gradually installed and at present over 160 machines are in operation in the weaving mills of the Parkland group. Most of these are four-colour looms, apart from a number of six-colour models recently delivered to the carded and worsted woollen mills belonging to Gledhill Brothers & Co., at Huddersfield. In fact, the starting up of loom No. 30,000 coincided with the first British use of the new six-colour Sulzer loom, presented in public for the first time last year at the International Textile Machinery Fair in Paris.

Swiss power in the year 2000

The rapid increase in the consumption of power recorded in industrial countries during the past twenty years is expected to continue unabated during the next thirty years. From 1950 to 1970, the total consumption of power in Switzerland trebled, to total 150,000 tcal (teracalories). During the years 1970-2000, it is expected to treble again to total some 500,000 tcal. The consumption per inhabitant is expected to follow the same pattern, rising from 24,000 mcal (megacalories) to 60,000-70,000 mcal. Two facts however complicate the forecasts: the average Swiss, becoming very much more concerned about the environment, is carefully watching the power economy; but, at the same time, he would like to be able to continue to have sufficient electricity. For the next thirty years, present sources of fuel will be able to satisfy the bulk of the increased needs. However, in ten years or so, petroleum products will reach their maximum share in the total power consumption at slightly over

80%. Subsequently, new sources of power, in particular natural gas and heat from nuclear power stations, will gradually increase in importance. In 1976-1977 the output capacity of the power stations in operation and under construction will amount to 40,850 gwh (gigawatt/hour). In view of the fact that the power requirements for the year 2000 are estimated at between 80,000 and 100,000 gwh, some 40,000-60,000 gwh will have to be produced in new plants, which will entail the construction of 10 nuclear power stations.

An avant-garde measuring system

A Swiss firm in Geneva, specialising in the manufacture of high precision machine tools and measuring instruments, recently perfected a new measuring and analysing system with avant-garde performances with regard to speed and precision. By adapting to the latest of their measuring machines a peripheral system comprising a computer and a printer, the Geneva firm's technicians have, in the field of checking watch ébauches, obtained results that are ten times as precise (to the nearest micron) and twenty times as fast (3 minutes instead of an hour) as with previous systems. This easily programmed new system can be adapted to the needs of many industrial branches; the watch industry, in particular, shows great interest in this system, which should enable it to make considerable savings of time and money compared with traditional methods of checking ébauches.

Revolution in the welding of plastics

A screwcutting and precision engineering firm at Le Landeron (Neuchâtel, Switzerland) has perfected new welding pliers for plastics, bringing this delicate work within everyone's reach. These pliers, which are extremely simple and quick to use, make it possible to weld end to end perfectly, plastic profiles, belts, joints, etc. This instrument possesses many advantages; the belts are guided in bushes (which are available for any profile desired) thus ensuring perfect parallelism, while a knife mounted on the pliers, makes it possible to cut the ends perfectly square. The ends to be welded never come in contact with the heating blade, the heat being transmitted only to the part of the belt protruding out of the bush; in this way it is possible to avoid any hardening of the plastic and, consequently, any molecular deformation. With this new system the belt no longer slides over the pulley, does not become heated and does not stretch; in this way it is also possible to weld a perfect bow.

New piece of furniture for mini accommodation

At the last Brussels Salon, an inventor from Lausanne (Vaud, Switzerland) presented a very useful item of furniture for anyone having to make the best of limited living space. This is a new fold-away bed (folding up against the wall to look like a cupboard) which, in spite of its very small size, possesses the big advantage of holding a normal size bed. The idea behind this new piece of furniture is quite original: the front panel of the cupboard consists of a main folding part, connected by hinges to a lower part forming a base. Part of the side walls of the cupboard, together with the door, form a strong frame supporting the springs and mattress; when the bed is lowered, the mattress is extended by a folding flap fixed to the bottom of the cupboard, on which rests a removable cushion. A pivoting part, attached to the upper edge of the panel, forms part of the top of the cupboard when closed and serves as legs when the bed is lowered. Apart from the saving of space, this new system offers a great many advantages; the door being smaller than in the usual fold-away beds, it is easier to handle. Furthermore a compartment underneath the springs means that absolutely no space is lost.

In Switzerland, medium-size and small concerns are in the majority

According to the latest figures known, 84.7% of the industrial concerns in Switzerland employ fewer than 100 employees. Although the structures are being modified at a fast rate, this ratio has varied hardly at all during the last few years: it worked out at 86.2% in 1967. In 1971, this type of concern employed a third of the total number of employees in industry (33.5%), i.e. about 115,000 more than the large firms with over 1,000 employees, which account for a fifth of the total manpower employed in industry (20.4%). The contribution of medium-size concerns with 100 to 499 employees is the biggest: at 35.6%, it equals the level reached in 1967. The lowest figure (10.5%) is recorded by firms with from 500 to 999 employees. As in the past, half the total number of employees in industry work in firms of fewer than 200 employees.

Swiss salaries:

Up 13.3% in one year

According to the survey of wages and salaries carried out by the Federal Office for Industry, Arts and Crafts and Labour in October 1971, the mean hourly wages of workers showed an increase of 13.3% between October 1970 and October 1971 compared with a rise of 10.2% from 1969 to 1970.